A Study of Asian-themed Malls in the Aberdeen District of City of Richmond, British Columbia

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INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Government passed an Immigration Act in 1967 which introduced a non-discriminatory policy for selecting immigrants, and introduced an Investment Canada Act in 1986 which was designed to attract immigrant investors and open doors to capital flow.[1] These new immigration policies have attracted many new immigrants into Canada who have changed the physical and socio-economic landscapes of many Canadian cities, particularly the residential and commercial patterns of suburban districts of metropolitan cities such as Vancouver and Toronto. During the 1980s and 1990s, for example, over 80% of Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and the People's Republic of China finally resided in Vancouver and Toronto.[2] They have also played a significant role in the rehabilitation of Old Chinatowns, the creation of New Chinatowns, and the development of Chinese Malls or Chinese Plazas in many large cities in Canada. Hence, the concept of Chinatown has greatly changed over time.

Chinatowns are now classified as Old Chinatowns, Reconstructed Historic Chinatowns, Replaced Chinatowns, and New Chinatowns. In addition to these Chinatowns, many suburban enclosed malls or open plazas, which were developed after the late 1970s, cater nearly exclusively to Chinese merchants and customers. Some of these suburban malls were initially called "New Chinatowns, " but they were more commonly referred to as Chinese Malls or Asian Malls by both the Chinese and the non-Chinese communities.

Old Chinatown

This term refers to Chinese residential, commercial and institutional inner-city neighbourhoods established before World War II but still physically discernible by its land uses, commercial facades, demographic structures, and socioeconomic activities.[3] Most of the Old Chinatowns have now been rehabilitated. Although an Old Chinatown may have been rehabilitated and beautified with new Chinese decorative structures such as a Chinese arch or a Chinese garden, it still retains over half of the buildings that were constructed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and still has many pre-World War II "tong" buildings. ("Tong" means association or society). The Chinatowns of Victoria, Vancouver and Montreal are all examples of "Old Chinatowns" (Appendix 1).

A defunct old Chinatown in which most of the pre-WWII buildings, especially the "tong" buildings, have been demolished and nearly all its Chinese residents have left, also falls into this category. Lethbridge Chinatown is an example.

Reconstructed Historic Chinatown

Many Old Chinatowns, especially those in former gold-mining towns, are extinct but still have the structures of the nineteenth century, a vestige of Chinese settlements during the gold rush periods. For example, Barkerville in the Province of British Columbia was a booming mining town in the 1860s. After the government designated the town as a heritage site, the dilapidated structures were repaired and the original streetscape of the town, including its Chinatown, was restored. Hence, a Reconstructed Historic Chinatown is a revival of a defunct Chinatown, an historic district, and usually a tourist destination.

Replaced Chinatown

A Replaced Chinatown is one which was built after World War II, and was either planned or unplanned. Property owners and merchants of a demolished Old Chinatown have the priority to buy properties and re-establish their businesses which results in a Replaced Chinatown. Like an Old Chinatown, a Replaced Chinatown is a Chinese residential, commercial, and institutional area, but unlike an Old Chinatown, it is an attractive inner-city neighbourhood. A Replaced Chinatown may be in situ such as the planned Replaced Chinatowns in Stockton and Sacramento in California, or relocated in nearby neighbourhoods such as Chinatown South in Edmonton in the Province of Alberta.

If over eighty percent of the old buildings in an Old Chinatown are demolished and replaced by new buildings in the course of rehabilitation and renovation, the original townscape of the Old Chinatown is destroyed. Hence, the rehabilitated Old Chinatown is virtually substituted by an unplanned Replaced Chinatown which was not usually intentionally built to replace the Old Chinatown.

New Chinatown

A New Chinatown, established after World War II, is basically a commercial entity which is characterized by a concentration of Chinese businesses along a section of a street or in a shopping plaza. Like a rehabilitated Old Chinatown or a Replaced Chinatown, a New Chinatown is identifiable by the brightly coloured commercial facades of Chinese business concerns, the activity of many Chinese pedestrians, the odours of Chinese merchandise and food, and the sounds of various Chinese dialects. Unlike an Old or Replaced Chinatown, a New Chinatown does not have a Chinese residential population although it is usually located close to neighbourhoods with a Chinese population. Toronto's Chinatown East, which emerged at the intersection of Broadview Avenue and Gerrard Street East in the 1970s, is an example of a New Chinatown.

Chinese Malls

Since the mid-1960s, suburban shopping centres have accounted for almost all the growth in Chinese shopping activities in Canada.[4] These Chinese malls or New Chinatowns consisted of retail stores and restaurants run by Chinese immigrants catering mainly to Chinese customers. In the early 1980s, for example, three small neighbourhood plazas at the intersection of Glen Watford Drive and Sheppard Avenue in Scarborough (suburban Toronto), were referred to as Scarborough Chinatown because the non-Chinese businesses of the three plazas had mostly been replaced by Chinese businesses and their customers were largely Chinese.[5] According to the 1994 Chinese Consumer Directory of Toronto, 34% of the Chinese businesses were located in the City of Toronto, 29% in Scarborough, and 10% in North York.[6]

Throughout the 1990s, an increasing number of suburban plazas or malls in Toronto and Vancouver were built not only by Chinese but also by non-Chinese developers. Many of these plazas or malls have no Oriental decorative motifs or a Chinese name, although most of their businesses are operated by Chinese and have Chinese store signage. Hence, they are commonly called Chinese Malls or Asian Malls instead of New Chinatown by both the Chinese and non-Chinese communities.

In this study, the author uses the term "mall" to include both an enclosed pedestrian mall and an open shopping plaza. The public usually considers a Chinese mall as one built by Chinese investors, with merchandise and service targeted at Chinese clientele. Are these the characteristics of a Chinese mall? A market analyst in Toronto suggested that a Chinese commercial centre must have at least one Asian supermarket, two sit-down restaurants, one bookstore/smoke shop, and one Asian-oriented financial institution as well as an Asian food court and personal services stores.[7] However, these criteria are not applicable to Chinese commercial centres in Vancouver and other cities. The author

finds that the so-called "Chinese Malls" have at least three of the following characteristics:

- visually distinct because nearly all of its billboards or store signs are written in Chinese characters and English letters. Chinese signs and advertisements are predominant throughout the malls and few of them include English letters.
- a great concentration of Chinese restaurants, grocery stores, bakeries, book stores, as well as other specialized businesses which cater specifically to Chinese customers. A Chinese mall also has a great concentration of Chinese herbalists, acupuncturists, travel agents, educational institutions and other services which are oriented nearly exclusively to Chinese clientele.
- the mall is named after a Hong Kong location or a popular plaza in Hong Kong such as the Aberdeen Centre, Admiralty Centre, Continental Centre (its Chinese name is *Gee Day*) and Pacific Plaza (its Chinese name is *Tai Koo*) in the City of Richmond; and the Peachtree Centre (its Chinese name is *Mong Kok*) and Pacific Mall (its Chinese name is *Tai Koo*) in the Town of Markham.
- many restaurants and stores inside a Chinese mall are named after the popular restaurants and stores in Hong Kong, Taiwan or China in order to attract Chinese customers who emigrated from these places. Like those in Hong Kong and Taiwan, the stores open up earlier and close much later than the stores in conventional malls. Hence, many store employees have long working hours.
- usually crowded with an overwhelming number of Chinese customers, particularly in food courts, cafes and restaurants and especially on weekends and holidays. Hence, many store workers cannot, need not, and do not speak English in dealing with customers.
- developed by Hong Kong or Taiwan entrepreneurs or investors and then divided into small strata-titled retailing units or offices, and sold like condominiums to merchants or investors. Usually public corridors are narrow and seating areas are limited as compared to those in the conventional malls.
- the sale of strata-titled units is usually advertised in Chinese newspapers and other Chinese news media, and the agents are usually Chinese.
- the purchasers of the mall's strata-titled units are mostly Chinese investors or merchants; hence a Chinese mall may be initially owned by one Chinese developer but eventually would be owned by a large group of Chinese owners.
- rarely has an anchor store such as a single large department store.
- usually an unplanned shopping centre in which there is little or no centralized control of the mall's business composition, layout and design. For example, it is not uncommon that two or three hair salons are set up close to one another. Hence, competition for the same market inside the mall is intensive.

Based on these ten characteristics, the author identified in May 1997. 58 so-called "Chinese malls" and 10 planned "Chinese malls" in North York, Scarborough, Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan of Metropolitan Toronto, and 49 "Chinese malls" in December 1998 in the Central Business District of Richmond of Metropolitan Vancouver.[8] The characteristics which are used to identify a "Chinese mall" have changed over time. For example, Richmond Public Market had a predominance of Chinese retailers and customers, but it was developed and is still owned by a non-Chinese company.[9] Richview Plaza, a Chinese mall developed by Chinese investors, has now been sold to a non-Chinese company. In 1992, the Yaohan International, a Japanese company, developed the Yaohan Centre, which was opened in 1995 with Yaohan Supermarket, 15 units of food court and 66 strata-title retail units.[10] After the company went bankrupt in 1997, the Yaohan Supermarket was sold to a Taiwan

company and renamed "Osaka Supermarket," focusing on Japanese specialty food. The Yaohan Centre is now owned by many Chinese from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Hence, the ethnic origin of mall investors, developers and owners cannot be used as a criterion to define a Chinese mall because ownership changes hands over time. Similarly, it is not always appropriate to use a predominance of Chinese customers as a criterion to define a "Chinese mall" because a "Chinese mall" may also have many Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese and even Caucasian customers. Furthermore, non-Chinese malls such as Richmond Centre, a conventional shopping centre, have a large number of Chinese customers as well as non-Chinese customers. The line blurs between what constitutes a Chinese mall or a conventional mall when it is based on the percentage of Chinese patrons.

The author also feels that the term "Chinese mall" has an ethnic connotation and tends to mislead the public into thinking it is Chinese owned, sells Chinese products only and serves Chinese people only. The proliferation of "Chinese or Asian malls" in the suburbs of Toronto has led to inflammatory remarks by some local residents and politicians. For example, Carole Bell, Deputy Mayor of Markham, said in August 1995 that long-time residents were moving out of Markham because of the Chinese strip malls.[11] Such an accusation was an exaggerated assertion and twelve Toronto-area mayors signed a statement condemning her comments.[12] Nevertheless, the author feels that it is more appropriate to use the term "Asian-themed Mall" because many of the so-called "Chinese malls" also sell other Asian products, and are patronized by other Asian people and non-Asian people as well as by Chinese. Also, many of these "Asian-themed malls" are not developed or owned by people of Chinese ethnic origin. In December 1999, the author conducted another survey which revealed that the number of "Asian-themed malls" in Richmond of Metro Vancouver and the number in the five northern suburban municipalities of Metro Toronto remained unchanged (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). All the earlier proposed "Asian-theme Malls" in Toronto, except for the Markham Place, were not yet built or abandoned. In 1994, for example, the Bayview Landmark Incorporated, planned to build a Chinese mall of 125 retail units at the Blackmore Avenue and Bayview Street, but the Ontario Municipal Board ruled that the number of retail units should be reduced to 30 and the amount of space devoted to restaurants and eating establishments be decreased.[13] As a result the proposed mall fell through. Similarly, the proposed World Centre, at the corner of Major Mackenzie Drive and Bayview Street, was planned by a development company for a large strata-titled Chinese Mall but the plan was abandoned after the site was sold to another developer. [14]

Similar to Toronto, the complaints against Asian-themed malls in the City of Richmond began to simmer. In March 1993, someone threw a firebomb into an art shop at Parker Place, a newly-built Chinese mall.[15] In May, Richmond's city council received several verbal complaints and one or two letters complaining about the lack of English on signs in the Chinese malls.[16] Some other Canadians feel excluded from the Asian-run businesses, baffled by Asian signs, and frustrated by Asian languages. These complaints have prompted some farsighted developers and community leaders to take measures to deal with this issue. For example, Thomas Fung, owner of the Aberdeen Centre, has always aimed to "Caucasianize or internationalize" the Asian-themed malls in order to attract customers of more diversified ethnic origins.[17] He, together with developers and owners of Parker Place, President Plaza, Fairchild Square, Yaohan Centre and Central Square, all in Richmond, formed the Asia West Business Association which advertises their clusters of malls as "Asia West."

A CASE STUDY

According to the 1996 Census, the population of ethnic Chinese in Canada amounted to 921,585 of which 46% resided in Ontario, 34% in British Columbia, and the remaining 20% in other provinces and territories (Appendix 2). In British Columbia, nearly 93% of its Chinese population were concentrated in Metropolitan Vancouver. The Census also reveals that about 50% of Metro Vancouver's Chinese people lived in Vancouver City, 17% in Richmond City, 14 % in Burnaby City, and the remaining 19% in other suburban municipalities (Appendix 3).

In 1996, the population of the City of Richmond reached 148,155 of which one-third or 50,215 were ethnic Chinese. The Census reveals that 48% of the City's population or 71,625 were immigrants.[18] A classification of the immigrants by place of birth reveals that 22,135 came from Hong Kong, 9,650 from the People's Republic of China, and 5,135 from Taiwan, amounting to 36,920 or nearly 52% of the total immigrant population. In addition, nearly 12,000 immigrants came from other parts of Asia such as the Philippines, India, Malaysia, Vietnam and South Korea. Hence, the large Asian immigrant population provides an extensive consumer market for the Asian-themed malls in the City of Richmond.

The Aberdeen District of Richmond's city centre is defined by the City's Planning Department as the area bounded by the Fraser River, Garden City Rd., Alderbridge Way and Sea Island Way. From July 22 to 31, 1999, the author carried out a study of the Asian-themed malls in the northern part of the District, and used them as a case study of the symbolic implications of new suburban ethnic shopping clusters in the context of multiculturalism in metropolitan cities in Canada.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are (a) to examine the spatial forms, functional composition, ownership patterns and market composition of Asian-themed malls in comparison with those of the conventional shopping centres; (b) to find out the impacts of immigration policies on the growth of Asian-themed malls and public issues arising from their formation; and (c) to obtain the respondents' vision of the future development of the Aberdeen District. It is hoped that this study will result in a better understanding of these malls, their role in the city's economic development, and the extent to which immigration policy has encouraged immigrants to open businesses and create jobs. It is also hoped that the study will promote business development among the various malls participating in the study.

Areal Extent

The study area is bounded by No. 3 Road on its west, Capstan Way on its north, Sexsmith and Garden City roads on its east, and Leslie and Odlin roads on its south and covers an area of about 85 hectares or 210 acres (Fig. 3). Twenty Asian-themed malls are located within this area:

1. Aberdeen Centre
2. Admiralty Centre
3. Cambie Centre
4. Central Square (Plate 1)
5. Continental Centre
6. Cosmo Plaza
7. Dorfolk Place

8. Empire Centre (Plate 2)
9. Fairchild Square
10. Pacific Plaza
11. Parker Place
12. President Plaza (Plate 3)
13. Richview Plaza
14. Union Square
15. Westin Business Park
16. Yaohan Centre (Plate 4)
17. 4140-60 No.3 Road
18. 4200 No.3 Road
19. 4260 No.3 Road
20. Cambie 3 Plaza (Plate 5)

The survey included only 19 malls because the owners of Cambie 3 Plaza refused to participate in the questionnaire survey.

Procedures

The author sought the support of the Richmond Department of Planning Development in this survey and obtained their input in his questionnaire. He visited the mall developers and managers, explained the objectives and importance of the questionnaire survey to them, and obtained their permission to conduct the survey inside their malls. He also asked for their input in the questionnaire.

This survey was partially supported by the Richmond Office of the United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society (SUCCESS). Mr. T.N. Foo, acting Executive Director, enlisted Parmenas Tse as a coordinator to train thirteen interviewers of whom eight were undergraduate students of the University of British Columbia, two were undergraduate students of the University of Victoria, and the remaining were students of Vancouver College and Kwantlen University College. An orientation meeting of the interviewers was held in the SUCCESS office at Caring Place, 7000 Minoru Road, Richmond. Each interviewer was given an information sheet on the research project. The interviews were conducted from July 22, to 31, 1999.

Finally, the author approached the Richmond News, the Ming Po Daily, Sing Tao Daily, the World Journal, and the Fairchild Television to help publicize the objectives and the importance of the survey.[19]

Design of Questionnaires

The questionnaire is divided into four sections. The first section consists of questions for mall developers and/or managers only, the second section for mall merchants only, and the third section for mall customers only. The last section which deals with the views and opinions of the future of the Aberdeen District, is distributed to merchants/owners, customers and city officials as well as members of advisory committees of the City of Richmond.

The questionnaire survey aimed at four focus groups with a total of about 900 participants: (a) 20 mall developers, (b) 300 mall merchants, (c) 500 mall customers, and (d) 80 city officials and representatives of City's advisory committees.

DESCRIPTION OF MALLS

A survey of the date of completion of the 19 Asian-themed malls in the study area revealed that two were built between 1985 and 1989; nine between 1990 and 1995; six between 1996 and 1999; one was under construction in 1999, and one mall was completed two years after the survey. Hence, most of the malls were completed in the early 1990s and coincided with the large influx of immigrants from Hong Kong (Table 1).

Table 1 Landed Immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China, 1986-2000

Year	No. of Persons		
	Hong Kong	Taiwan	China
1986	5,893	695	1,902
1987	16,170	1,467	2,635
1988	23,281	2,187	2,778
1989	19,908	3,388	4,430
1990	29,261	3,681	7,989
1991	22,340	4,488	13,915
1992	38,910	7,456	10,429
1993	36,576	9,867	9,466
1994	44,169	7,411	12,486
1995	31,746	7,691	13,291
1996	29,967	13,216	17,549
1997	22,250	13,320	18,520
1998	8,087	7,191	19,779
1999	3,663	5,464	29,110
2000	2,857	3,511	36,718

Source: Canada: *Citizenship and Immigration Statistics*: Tables on Country of Last Permanent Residency by Age Group and Gender, and British Columbia: Data Services BC Stats

Morphology

The morphology of the 19 malls can be classified into four groups according to the spatial distribution of retail clusters:

a) Closed Pedestrian Mall

It has a compact, rectangular or irregular shape. Sometimes shops are distributed in clusters around two levels and open onto an indoor plaza. Seven malls belong to this group: Yaohan Centre, President Plaza, Aberdeen Centre, Parker Place, Pacific Plaza, Admiral Centre and Cosmo Plaza.

b) Open Plaza

It consists of two or more buildings surrounded by an expanse of grade-level car parking and each retail unit has convenient automobile access. Six malls belong to this group: Union Square, Continental Centre, Fairchild Square, Westin Business Park, 4146-60, No. 3 Road, and Empire Centre.

c) L-shaped Mall

It consists of two wings of stores forming an L- or a crescent shape which has the advantage of a shorter walking distance between car and store. Four malls belong to this group: Dorfolk Place, Central Square, Richview Plaza, and 4200, No. 3 Road.

d) Commercial Block

It is a two- or three-storied building which houses a variety of businesses under a single roof. Two malls belong to this group: Cambie Centre, and 4260 No. 3 Road.

Internal Structure

Most of the malls were small in size and did not have a large floor area for retail/office space. Nearly half of the 19 malls had a retailing area of less than 50,000 square feet each (Table 2). Most of the saleable or rentable units were small in size. The 19 malls had a total of 1,255 units of which 44% were less than 500 sq. ft. per unit and 32% between 500 and 999 sq. ft. (Table 3). Only 4 % of the units had 2,000 sq. ft. or more per unit. In other words, the Asian-themed malls were characterized by a large number of small retailing or office units. The 19 malls had a total of about 4,026 parking spaces of which about 2,970 were surface parking spaces and 1,056 spaces were inside structured parkades. Some developers said that parking was not a problem in the district but it was a serious problem in some malls that had a large number of patrons at weekends and during holidays.

Table 2 Total Saleable or Rentable Floor Area in 19 malls

Range of Floor Area in Each Mall in sq. ft.	No. of Malls
Less than 10,000	1
10,000 - 40,999	8
41,000 - 99,999	6
100,000 and over	3
Unspecified	1
Total 881,000 sq. ft.	19

Table 3 Average Size Per Saleable or Rentable Unit in 19 Malls

Range of Size (sq. ft. / per unit)	No. of Saleable/Rentable Units	% of Total
Less than 300	270	21.5
300 - 499	280	22.3
500 - 999	406	32.4
1,000 - 1,499	157	12.5
1,500 - 1,999	86	6.9
2,000 and over	47	3.7
Unspecified	9	0.7
Total	1,255	100.00

In July 1999, 14 of the 19 malls were strata-titled. In term of ownership, the developers of 4 malls had sold all their units, 5 malls had sold 70-90%, 1 mall had sold 20%, and the developers of 7 malls still owned all the units and had no intention to sell them. Data on the remaining 2 malls were not available because the Empire Centre was till under construction, and the developers of the other mall did not wish to disclose how many units they had sold.

There were 695 business concerns inside the 19 malls. Most of the businesses occupy one unit but some businesses such as supermarkets and restaurants occupy many units. About 19 % of the retailing businesses were engaged in clothing, boutique goods, and children's wear, 16% were restaurants and fast food outlets ; and 16% sold books, magazines and gift cards (Table 4). In the service section, about 15% were beauty salons or hair studios, and 13 % were medical, dental or optical offices. The entertainment business was dominated by arcade/video games. In some malls, a supermarket or a popular restaurant functions as an anchor store and is responsible for attracting a large number of customers to the mall.

Table 4 Classification of Businesses, 1999

Type of Business	No. of Business Concerns
RETAILING (388 stores)	
Clothing/boutique goods/children wear	75
Restaurants/barbecue/fast cooked food in food court	63
Books/ magazines/gifts/ cards	63
Bakery/candy/café/snack	47
Computers/ T.V/ Video/ Electronics	31
Herbalist/pharmacy	19
Jewellery	14
Groceries/supermarket (meat and fish suppliers)	12
Shoes/handbags/leather goods	4
Other merchandise	60
SERVICES (291 stores and offices)	
Beauty salon/hair studio/ skin care salon	43
Medical/dental/optical office, clinic or lab	38
Travel agency	21
Banking/Insulante	12
Dance/martial arts/cultural centre	8
Law office/ notary public	5
Other services or unspecified	164
ENTERTAINMENT(16 business concerns)	
Arcade/video games	8
Cinema/Theatre	1
Other entertainment	7
Total	695

ORIGINAL MALL DEVELOPERS/MAJOR PARTNERS

The 19 malls in the Aberdeen District were developed by companies which were owned either by a family or by a group of investors. A survey of the ethnic origin of the original individual developer or the major partner of the development company showed that 3 mall developers were Canada-born Chinese; 12 were Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong, 2 were Chinese immigrants from Taiwan, and 2 were non-Chinese. The ownership pattern had been changing since the malls were built. For example, Yaohan Centre is a strata-titled mall which was originally developed by a Japanese company and is now owned by many Chinese merchants and investors. A Chinese immigrant developed the Richview Plaza which has now been sold to a western company. Hence, the Asian-themed malls have been developed and run by Chinese as well by non-Chinese investors and entrepreneurs.

Major Reasons for Investment in Richmond

14 original developers or their representatives responded to the question on what were the factors determining their decision to develop a mall in Richmond. All the respondents considered the "return on investment potential"and "established Asian market in Richmond" as the major reasons. Two developers did not consider the "established Asian market" as the major factor because they developed the malls well before the influx of Chinese immigrants to Richmond in the late 1980s. One of the developers stated that he/she had inherited the property from parents. Nine developers stated that "property available at the right time" and "right price at the time of purchase" were also major factors. The "proximity to Vancouver International Airport, Vancouver, and Lower Mainland," "provision of City Services and amenities," and "established tourist spot" were not important factors for the original developers establishing the malls in Richmond.

Impacts of immigration policies on decision to invest in Richmond

Six respondents said that the immigration policies of Canada had no influence on the development of an Asian-themed mall in Richmond. One respondent said that the major reason was the increase in population and expanding market in Richmond where there was potential for business and other developments. One respondent said that "Canadian immigration policy favours the wealthy and highly skilled" immigrants who were affluent customers and created an affluent market in Richmond. A respondent felt that the policy of multiculturalism and the system of education in Canada created an open-minded environment and attracted immigrants. Another respondent said that Canada was less discriminatory toward Asians than many other countries; hence, it attracted immigrants from Asian countries. One respondent said that people came to Canada because it did not have a compulsory military draft policy.

MALL MERCHANTS

The managers of two malls asked the interviewers to give the questionnaires to them and they would distribute the questionnaires to their malls' business concerns. They said that the completed questionnaires would be mailed to the author; however, they were not received.

The interviewers visited 234 business concerns in 17 malls where owners of 133 stores or offices responded to the survey (Table 5). Owners of 101 business concerns either refused to respond or were not in the store at the time of interview and their employees did not accept interviews. Very often owners or managers of business concerns, especially restaurants, grocery stores, and food stores were

so busy in dealing with customers that they had no time for interviews. Therefore, the response rate was 133/234 or 57%.

Table 5 Number of Responding and Non-Responding Merchants, July 1999

Code No. of Mall	No. of Responding Stores	No. of Non-Responding Stores	Total No. of Stores approached
1	5	4	9
2	14	17	31
3	11	14	25
4	11	14	25
5	8	3	11
6	3	1	4
7	17	19	36
8	7	7	14
9	12	8	20
10	5	0	5
11	13	1	14
12	20	4	24
13	2	0	2
14	1	1	2
15	2	1	3
16	1	2	3
17	1	5	6
Total	133	101	234

The 133 businesses consisted of 90 retailing stores and 41 service stores (Table 6). Nearly 92% of the participants were Chinese immigrants of whom 102 came from Hong Kong, 17 from Taiwan, 2 from China, and 1 from another place. Only 2 respondents were Canada-born Chinese, 2 were non-Chinese and 7 did not answer the questionnaire.

Most of the merchants were recent immigrants: 19% of them entered Canada between 1986 and 1989, and 57 % between 1990 and 1999. Therefore, most of the stores have been established recently in the Aberdeen District: about 60% of them had been in operation for three years or less. Less than 40% of the respondents were admitted to Canada as entrepreneurs, investor immigrants or independent immigrants (Table 7).

Many of the respondents said that they ran the business to create jobs for themselves and/or their family members and tried to make a living in Canada. Only 11 respondents stated that they operated the business purely to fulfil the requirement of the immigration regulations. After all, 65% of the respondents had already obtained Canadian citizenship. Most of the respondents stated that they would continue to run their business because of the following reasons: (a) to make a living, (b) to set up a business for interest, (c) to create a job for himself or herself, and/or (d) to find something to do to fill time.

The respondents stated that the major factors for setting up business in the malls in the Aberdeen District were, in a descending order, (a) an established Asian market in Richmond, (b)

property available at the right time, (c) a location close to their residence, (d) the return on investment potential, and (e) right price at the time of purchase or lease.

Table 6 Types of Business of 133 Stores

Type of Business	No. of Stores
Retailing:	
Clothing/Boutique/ Children Wear	19
Computers/T.V./ Video/Electronic	14
Bakery/Candy/Café/Snack	8
Books/Magazines/Gifts/ Cards	8
Herbalists/ Pharmacy	8
Restaurants/Barbecue/ Fast Food in Food Court	6
Shoes/Handbags/Leather Goods	3
Jewellery	1
Groceries/Supermarket	1
Other Merchandise	22
Service	
Beauty Salon/Hair Studio/Skin Care Salon	10
Medical/Dental/ Optical Office, Clinic or Lab	6
Travel Agency	5
Banking/ Insurance	2
Other Services	18
Total	133

Table 7 Criteria of Admittance to Canada

Criterion of Admission	Number of Merchants
Entrepreneur Immigrant	22
Investor Immigrant	26
Independent Immigrant	37
Family Reunification	16
Retirement	3
Other	3
Unspecified	26
Total	133

About half of the businesses were owned by a sole proprietor, and the remaining half by a partnership or corporations. 61 % of the merchants leased the units and only about 35% had purchased a unit. Most of the retailing units were small in size: 65% of them had a floor area less than 1,000 square feet. One hundred and eleven store owners revealed their employment figures which

amounted to 238 full-time and 318 part-time workers. 81 stores employed non-relative workers only or had non-relative employees as well as owners themselves and their relatives (Table 8). Similar to the previous studies by Peter Li on Chinese businesses in Richmond and in Canada, interview data indicate that the current ethnic enterprise cannot be fully explained either by the blocked mobility thesis that discrimination and racial barriers restrict members of ethnic minorities to limited employment and channel them into certain business niches, or by the transplanted cultural thesis which claims that the success of ethnic enterprises are ascribable to some cultural characteristics such as families, extended clan relations, and value on land-ownership etc.[20]

Table 8 Classification of Workers

Classification	No. of Stores	No. of Persons
Owners	16	30
Relatives	7	29
Owner and Relatives	7	24
Non-relatives	42	143
Non-relatives and Owners	27	187
Non-relatives and Relatives	3	35
Non-relatives, Owners and Relatives	9	108
Unspecified	22	-
Total	133	556

Ninety-five respondents said that over 50 percent of their customers spoke Cantonese, and 48 respondents said that 30 to 50 percent of their customers spoke Mandarin. Almost two-thirds of the respondents (n=83 or 63%) stated that they had not experienced any racial problem in dealing with customers. Such a reply was expected because most of the customers were Chinese. About one-third (n=47 or 35%) did not answer the question and 3 respondents (2%) answered "yes" mainly because the customers were annoyed that the store staff members did not speak or understand English and could not communicate with them. One of the three respondents said that he/she experienced a racial problem with government officials and politicians.

Nearly 62% of the 133 respondents would like to have more programs or events organized by social service agents or government departments in the malls because these activities would attract more people to the malls and help promote business. However, 24 % of respondents opposed that or were not sure for the following reasons: a) insufficient parking, b) such activities were of low quality, and c) a clothing store owner said that these activities did not promote his sales. Most of the respondents who supported the organization of programs or events preferred that they should be held once a month or during festive holidays such as the Chinese New Year. Should they be organized, 41 respondents stated that they would help putting up posters or distributing flyers, 35 would make a donation in kind, and 17 would give a cash donation. Only 18 respondents refused to make any kind of donation.

MALL CUSTOMERS

Because of financial and time constraints, the interviewers could conduct interviews of customers in 9 malls only: Aberdeen Centre, Admiralty Centre, Central Square, Continental Centre, Cosmo Plaza, Pacific Plaza, Parker Place, President Plaza, and Yaohan Centre. A total of 485 customers were approached and 381 persons responded to the survey: 179 male, 190 female and 12 couples. In this survey a couple was considered one customer and analysis was based on the partner who was the main speaker during the interview (Table 9). Hence, the response rate was 381/485 or 79 %.

Table 9 Location, Age and Sex of Responding Customers, July 1999

Location	Age 15-21		22-64		65 and over			Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Couple	
Aberdeen Centre	6	11	11	16	0	2	3	49
Admiralty Centre	1	4	1	2	1	3	0	12
Central Square	5	5	12	7	0	0	0	29
Continental Centre	3	3	6	4	2	1	0	19
Cosmos Plaza	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Pacific Plaza	0	3	3	2	0	0	0	8
Parker Place	12	20	15	15	2	0	1	65
President Plaza	2	6	11	15	1	1	0	36
Yaohan Centre	34	32	44	35	5	3	8	161
Total	64	84	103	96	12	10	12	381

Nearly 39 % of the customers were young people aged between 15 and 21. Most of the customers were Chinese immigrants. Over two-thirds of the respondents (n=271 or 71 %) came from Hong Kong. Thirty respondents (8%) were Chinese immigrants from Taiwan, twenty-two (6 %) from the People's Republic of China, and eight (2%) from other places. Nineteen out of 381 customers (5%) were Canada-born Chinese. Similarly, a small proportion (n=22 or 6 %) were non-Chinese customers. Nine customers did not state whether they were local born or immigrants. It is not surprising that 74% of the customers used Cantonese only or both Cantonese and other languages during the interview.

The malls served a regional market of Metropolitan Vancouver although the local market was significant: 60% of customers lived in Richmond (Table 10). Over 90% of the customers came to the malls by private car most of the time. Only six customers came to the mall on foot most of the time. Hence, a parking facility is important to mall business in the district.

On any single trip to patronize the Asian-themed malls, the respondents listed, in descending order, their main objectives: (a) to shop in supermarket/bakery, (b) to have dim sum lunch or lunch in food courts, (c) to meet friends, (d) to have lunch and/or dinner in restaurants, (e) to purchase clothing and other merchandise, and (f) to play video games. Eighty-six percent of 366 respondents said that they usually spent less than two hours in the malls and only 14% stayed one morning or an afternoon.

The major attractions that induced respondents to come to the malls are, in descending order, (a) free parking, (b) a convenient place to meet friends, (c) one-stop shopping convenience, (d) more variety of goods and services, and (e) a climatically controlled, enclosed environment.

Most of the customers learned about the sales, performances and other events in the malls from Chinese radios and relatives and friends. Chinese newspapers, magazines and television were slightly less important sources of information.

Table 10 Place of Residence of Customers

Location	Number of Persons	% of Total
Richmond	228	59.8
Vancouver	88	23.1
Burnaby	25	6.6
North or West Vancouver	13	3.4
Surrey	6	1.6
Delta	4	1.0
White Rock	2	0.5
New Westminster	2	0.5
Tri-city	2	0.5
Other places	11	2.9
Total	381	100.0

Non-Chinese Customers

All the 25 non-Chinese respondents spoke English in the interview and 28% of them lived in Richmond and 52% in other parts of Metro Vancouver. Most of the answers to the questionnaire were similar to those of Chinese respondents except for those that are listed below. Forty-six percent of the non-Chinese respondents were born in Canada and 54 % were immigrants. Most of the respondents learned about the events and sales in the mall from relatives and friends and the English news media. The major attractions that induced them to the mall are, in descending order, (a) Asian food and products, and events such as Chinese New Year celebration), (b) more variety of goods and services, and (c) free parking.

Senior Customers

Most of the senior customers' answers were similar to those of the total respondents' answers except that most of the senior customers went to the malls either by private car or by bus. They went to the malls to shop in the supermarket/ bakery, have dim sum lunch and dinner in restaurants, to meet friends, and "to kill time" as well.

FUTURE OF THE ABERDEEN DISTRICT

All 133 responding merchants answered the section regarding the future of the Aberdeen District during the interviews. Only 22 out of 381 customers did not respond to this section. A senior planner of the City of Richmond, assisted the author with the distribution of this section of questionnaire to various city departments. She received replies from 34 respondents of whom 10 respondents were town planners, 3 were engineers, 3 politicians, 5 members on advisory committees or commissions, 3 department directors or managers, 2 RCMP or security officers, 5 community or youth workers, and 3 respondents did not specify their positions (they are referred to as "official participants" in this survey or "official" for brevity).

Internationalization of Asian-themed Malls

Participants were asked whether the current Asian-themed malls in the Aberdeen District should be "Caucasianized" or "internationalized" in order to sustain growth in the district. In other words, they were asked if more non-Asian merchants be encouraged to set up business and more non-Asian products be sold inside the malls. Over half of the 548 participants (n=293 or 53%) strongly agreed or agreed that more non-Asian stores selling non-Asian products should be set up in the Asian-themed malls in order to sustain growth in the area (Table 11). About one-third (n=138 or 25%) strongly disagreed or disagreed, whereas 83 persons (15%) were not sure, and 34 persons (6%) did not reply.

Table 11 "Caucasianization"or "Internationalization" of Asian-themed Mall

Opinion	No. of Official Participants	No. of Merchants	No. of Customers	Total
Strongly Agree	9	26	43	78
Agree	12	59	144	215
Strongly Disagree	1	2	61	29
Disagree	8	17	84	109
No Sure	4	18	26	83
Unanswered	0	11	23	34
Total	34	133	381	548

Major reasons for supporting "Internationalization" stated by

(A) Merchants (n=85 or 64%)

1. "Internationalization" will expand the customer base. Attract more customers of different

cultural background. "Internationalization" will find not only Asian products but other products in the area and increase volume of sale and help promote prosperity of the area.

2. Attract more tourists and more business because many new hotels have been built in Richmond.
3. Given the recent Asian economic crisis, the average Asian-based market had shrunk 30 to 50%. Many went out of business while others suffer greatly. Expanding the market will reduce the risk of focussed market.
4. The "Chinese" market base continues to decline. The isolation of language so far has lost many market/sales opportunities that would otherwise be realized.

5. Canada is a multi-cultural society therefore all races should be mixed. "Internationalization" will help promote multiculturalism and encourage more Asian customers to join the main stream society. Eliminate the social gap between the Asian/Mainstream.
6. Agree but it is difficult to really "Caucasianize" the district because Caucasians prefer to do their regular shopping in local Caucasian malls.
7. Too many Chinese merchants. Internationalization will reduce competition among them.
8. Too many Chinese customers who like bargaining. Encourage more Western people who do not always bargain.
9. Non-Asian people do not come because of too many Asian customers.
10. The best mixture of Asian and Non-Asian businesses is 50-50.

(B) Customers (n=187 or 49%)

1. Greater variety of products and attract more people of other ethnic origins.
2. Too much Asian is not good in North America.. Internationalization will help create a multicultural environment in Canada.
3. I am not Asian and Asian people should be integrated.
4. Focus in only one market is risky. Should have more variety of products.
5. Bad to form a small circle. Too many Chinese will cause bias.

(C) Official Participants (n=21 or 61%)

1. Geographical area is too large and Asian market too small to make the area economically viable for purely Asian-themed malls.
2. Asian-themed malls served mainly 40% of citizens in Richmond therefore they have limited sales potential. If they are internationalized, they will attract more diverse merchants and visitors. Internationalization will help sustain their growth and prosperity.
3. Asian-themed malls have neglected the buying power of non-Asians, including tourists from foreign countries and do not provide equal opportunity to all Canadians to do business and shopping.
4. Internationalization will help reduce the perception that Richmond is becoming solely a place for Asian businesses which has effects on the local housing market and the types of commercial businesses that Richmond attracts.
5. One respondent said that he felt very unwelcome in several places operated by Asian descent people. Another respondent visited 3 Asian-themed malls and felt very much an outsider and merchants were not helpful. One respondent felt that Asian-themed malls tend to alienate the general public.
6. One respondent stated that "Caucasianization" is different from "internationalization." He does not want the former and he supports the latter.
7. Internationalization will help promote multiculturalism and increase the harmony among different communities in Richmond.
8. One respondent feels that the presence of Asian merchandise and services can add to the vibrance and excitement of the Aberdeen District and the City of Richmond. However,

themed products may build barriers and not bridges in the community.

Major Reasons for opposition to internationalization stated by

(A) Merchants (n=19 or 14%)

1. The district is famous for its Chinese products. More non-Asian merchants and products will only cause confusion.
2. An Asian-themed mall has its unique features and its characteristics should be maintained.
3. Many tourists come here to experience "Asian malls."
4. No Caucasians will come to invest in an "Asian" area because there is no market here for them.

(B) Given by Customers (n=145 or 29%)

1. If the mall is not "internationalized" enough, it will attract neither Chinese nor Caucasian customers. Internationalization will not help business.
2. The blend of two or more cultures is not a bad thing but the atmosphere of this district should somehow be preserved. Western malls such as Richmond Centre have their own characteristics whereas Asian malls have brought a new culture in Canada.
3. Caucasians and Chinese/Asians have different needs. Specialty malls meet specific needs of people. I come to Asian malls because I do not know English.
4. People, Chinese or non-Chinese, come here for Chinese food and products. Maintain the uniqueness of the area.

(C) Given by Official Participants (n=9 or 27%)

1. The current Asian character of malls will help give Richmond a distinct identity.
2. Asian-themed malls are a somewhat unique attraction. Making them "generic" would be regressive.
3. Asian-themed malls are extremely popular and apparently well patronized in their present form.
4. Internationalization would be detrimental because people go to these malls for the Asian specialties and atmosphere. It will eliminate the characteristics of Asian-theme malls. The major effort is not to "internationalize" but to make them more friendly and accessible to the general public.
5. If sustainability means "economic" stability , then supply and demand will determine these market forces. Internationalization, a mixture of Asian and non-Asian merchants and products, is not a sustaining force.
6. Richmond has now been over supplied with retailing services. We do not want to add more retailing services by altering the Asian-theme malls.

Reasons for Being Unsure or Not Replying stated by

(A) Merchants (n=29 or 22%)

1. Do not understand the meaning of "Caucasianized" or "Internationalized."
2. New malls have not yet been filled up by Chinese shops - many empty units and many problems. How can you attract other non-Asian vendors?
3. Asian-themed malls are useful to Chinese customers who cannot speak English. It will take time to explain the products to them after internationalization.
4. Depends on customers' preference.

(B) Customers (n=49; 22%)

1. Canada is a multicultural country. Internationalization or not internationalization has no impact.

(C) Official Participants (n=4; 12%)

1. Members of the English-speaking community objected to a lack of English signage, but not to the type of product, style of marketing, character, environment etc. We should continue to nurture the distinct identity and retail opportunity of the Aberdeen District if we want it to grow as a regional centre.
2. The perception (real or imagined) of Asian-themed malls is that they are "Asian only" in the minds of some non-Chinese speaking residents. Inside the malls, they are not understood, cannot find their way around and feel uncomfortable. Asian-themed malls could maintain their "uniqueness" but could be made much more welcoming to the overall community residents and visitors alike. The availability of services, events, marketing etc. in English will help create a "welcoming" and open atmosphere in the Asian-themed malls.

Measures to Broaden the Range of Customers

Participants were asked which measures would attract a broader range of customers and visitors from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds to the Asian-themed malls. Six measures were listed (Table 12). The ranking is based on a point system: No. of Persons who strongly agree or agree x 2 points + No. of persons who disagree or unsure x 1 point. The sum total shows that most participants felt that to use both English and Chinese signage in an Asian-themed mall (555 points) was the most important measure, followed by more product description in English (527 points) and the use of English and Chinese in servicing customers (525 points).

Table 12 Measures to Attract a Broader Range of Customers

Measures	Opinions Measured by Points			Sum of Points
	Official	Merchants	Customers	
Both English and Chinese signage	42	145	368	555
More production description in English	41	140	346	527
Use English and Chinese in serving customers	42	143	340	525
Publishing mall pamphlets in English and Chinese	31	133	302	466
International performances and events	36	121	304	461
More non-Asian retailing/service in the mall	38	125	276	439

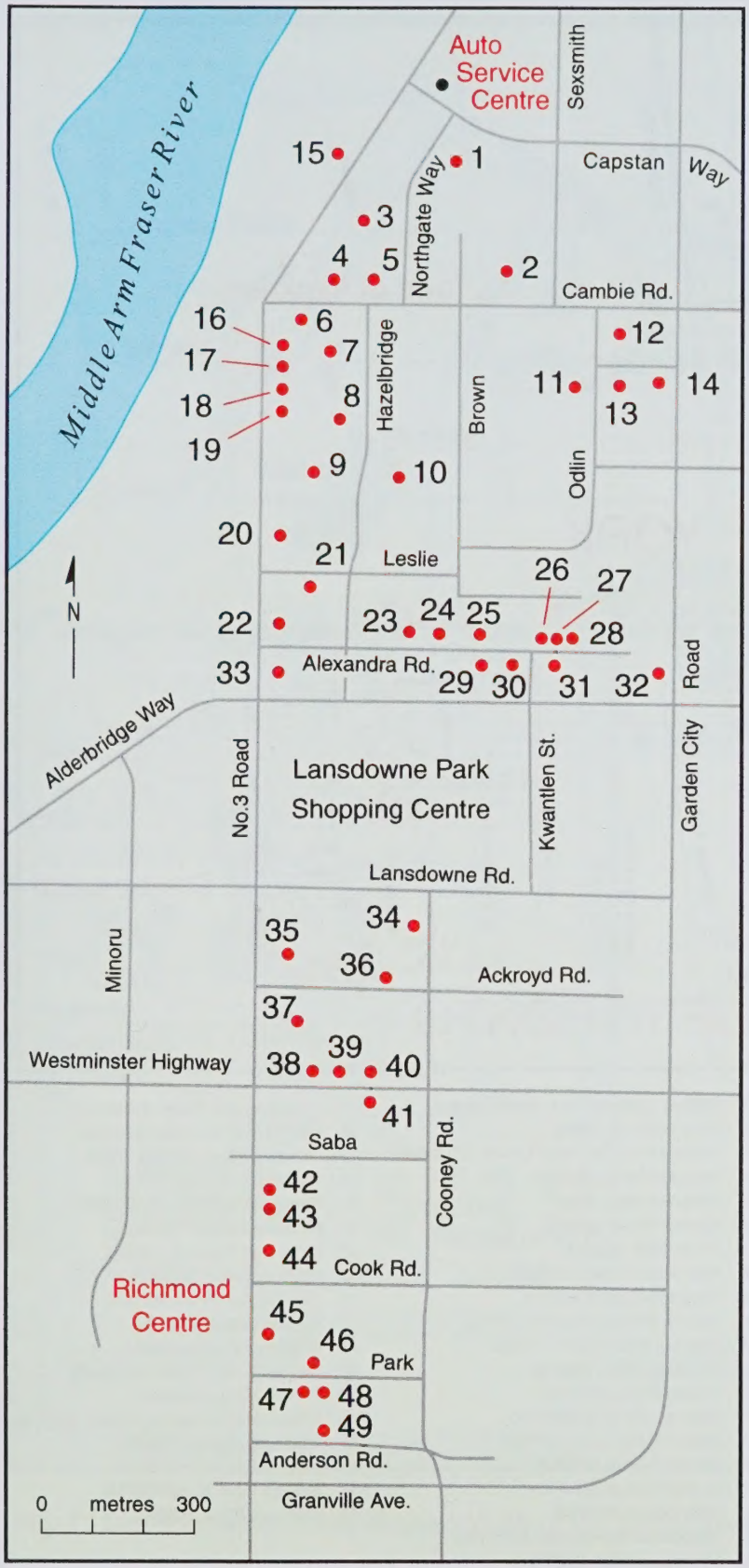
Other Measures Suggested

(A) By Merchants

1. Advertising in Mainstream media; explain to mainstream community that all Asian-theme malls are open to all people, not only Asian.
2. More advertisement and promotion.
3. Hire some employees of different ethnic origin so that customers of non-Asian ethnic origins come to shop and feel more comfortable.

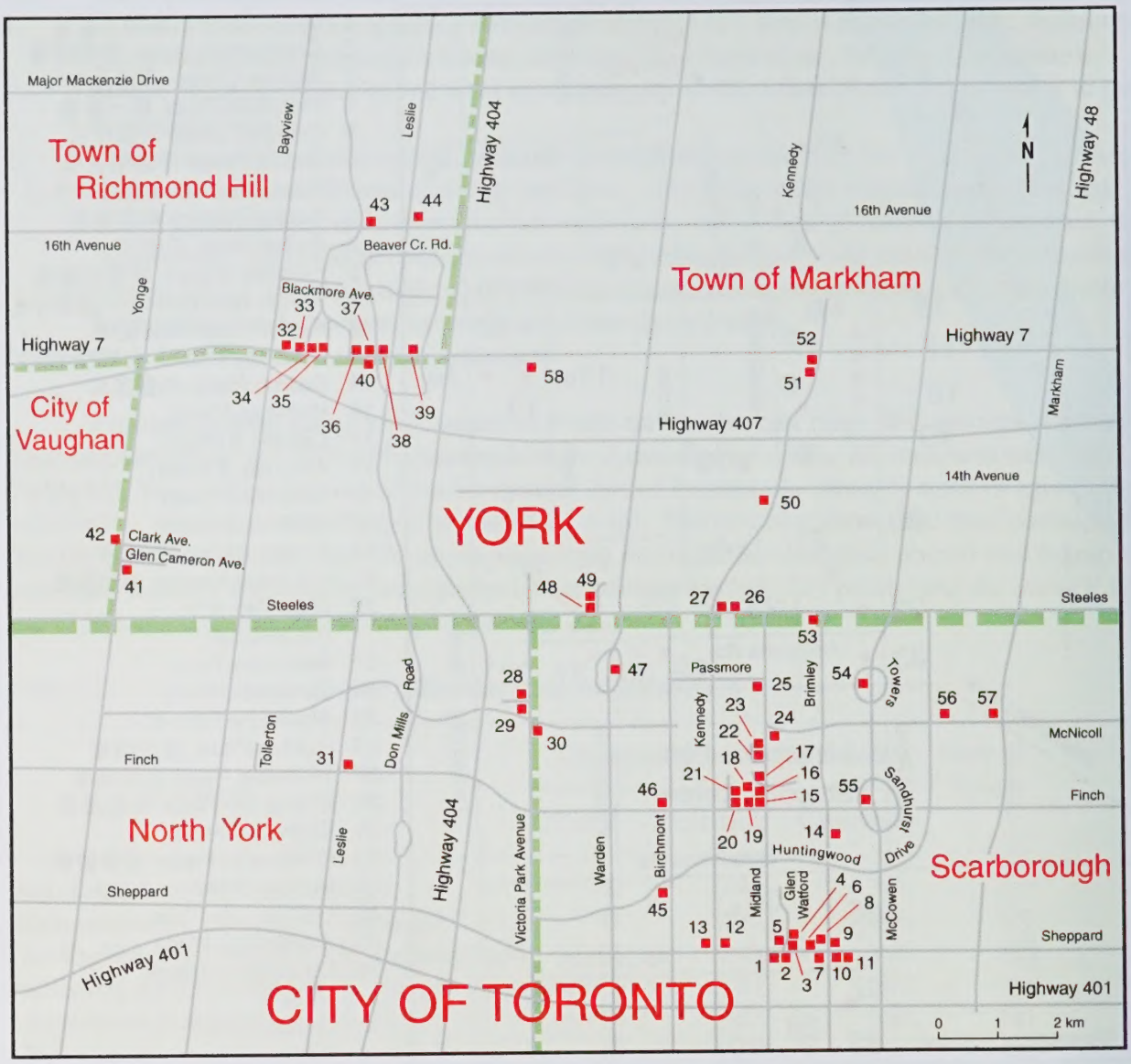
(B) By Customers

1. Advertisements in English newspaper.
2. Provision of facilities like Science World in Vancouver.
3. Asian food festivals will attract customers of other ethnic origins.



1 Union Square 新城市廣場
2 Continental Centre 置地廣場
3 Yaohan Centre 八佰伴中心
4 President Plaza 統一廣場
5 Cambie Centre 甘比中心
6 Dorfolk Place 多福閣廣場
7 Aberdeen Centre 香港仔中心
8 Central Square 中環廣場
9 Parker Place 百家店
10 Fairchild Square 新時代廣場
11 Westin Business Park 偉信中心
12 Pacific Plaza 太古廣場
13 Admiralty Centre 金鐘廊
14 Cosmo Plaza 柏麗廣場
15 Richview Plaza
16 Cambie 3 Plaza
17 4140 No. 3 Road
18 4200 No.3 Road
19 4260 No.3 Road
20 Empire Centre 帝國中心
21 Universal Square 金獅廣場
22 4800 Parkside (No.3 Road)
23 Alexandra Plaza
24 Landmark Plaza
25 Alexandra Square
26 Golden Plaza 黃金商場
27 Winstone Plaza 金源商場
28 Chung Kin Plaza 中建廣場
29 Olympia Centre
30 Connaught Plaza 康樂廣場
31 Venezia Place
32 Garden City Plaza
33 Alderbridge Place
34 Lansdowne Village Square
35 Richport Town Centre
36 Ackroyd Place
37 Ackroyd Plaza
38 Richspot Plaza 富貴門中心
39 Johnson Centre 祥順中心
40 8251 Westminster Highway
41 Richmond Public Market
42 Richmond Plaza
43 6280 Plaza
44 Brighouse Square
45 Time Square
46 Park Village 華貿市場
47 Park Plaza
48 Hoson Centre 豪盛中心
49 Anderson Square

Fig. 1 Distribution of Asian-themed Malls in Richmond, Metro Vancouver, Dec. 1999



1 Midtown Plaza 中城商場
2 Cathay Plaza 國泰商場
3 Dragon Centre 慶龍中心
4 Glen Watford Drive 怡東商場
5 Dynasty Centre 皇朝中心
6 Mandarin Shopping Centre 雲華商場
7 Pearl Plaza 明珠商場
8 Brimley Commons 八利廣場
9 Prince Mall 龍子商場
10 Centerview Square 金鄉商場
11 Victory Shopping Centre 勝利商場
12 Agincourt Commercial Centre 東成商業中心
13 Agincourt Mall 愛靜閣商場
14 Chartwell Shopping Centre 集友商場
15 Finch - Midland Centre 芙蘭商場
16 Scarborough Village Mall 士嘉堡村
17 Silverland Centre 銀星中心
18 Scarboro Industrial Centre 嘉堡工商業中心
19 First Commercial Place 第一商場
20 Milliken Square 芙麗村商場
21 Milliken Business Park 美麗村工業廣場
22 Midland Court 美麟閣
23 Midland North Business Centre 北芙麟商業中心
24 Evergold Centre 鴻運中心
25 Midland Village 美麟村
26 Market Village 城市廣場
27 Pacific Mall 太古廣場
28 New World Plaza 新世界商場
29 Prosperity Centre 永富中心
30 Victoria Business Centre 維堡中心
31 Finch - Leslie Square 利是商場
32 Ho - View Plaza 好景商場
33 Golden Plaza 黃金商場
34 Chalmers Gate 東亞銀行中心
35 Golden View Centre 富景商場
36 Doncrest Plaza 百利廣場
37 Jubilee Square 銀禧中心
38 Time Square 時代廣場
39 Shoppes of the Parkway 喜來登商場
40 Commerce Gate 金貿中心
41 Glen Cameron Place 金馬倫中心
42 Central Park on Yonge 雍雅廣場
43 Lexus - Bayview Square 富豪中心
44 Richlane 富食街
45 Huntingwood Square 肯定活商場
46 Birchwood Plaza 百匯商場
47 Bamburgh Gardens 百寶商場
48 Metro Square 大都會廣場
49 New Century Plaza 世紀廣場
50 Milliken Mews 萬利商場
51 Peachtree Centre 旺角中心
52 New Kennedy Square 新旺角廣場
53 Regency Place 順景商場
54 Milliken Wells Shopping Centre 愛登商場
55 Woodside Square 活瀾商場
56 Scherwood Centre 富華中心
57 Swing'n Bowl 反斗城娛樂商場
58 Markham Place 萬錦廣場

Fig. 2 Distribution of Asian-themed Malls in the Northern Suburbs of Metro Toronto, Dec. 1999

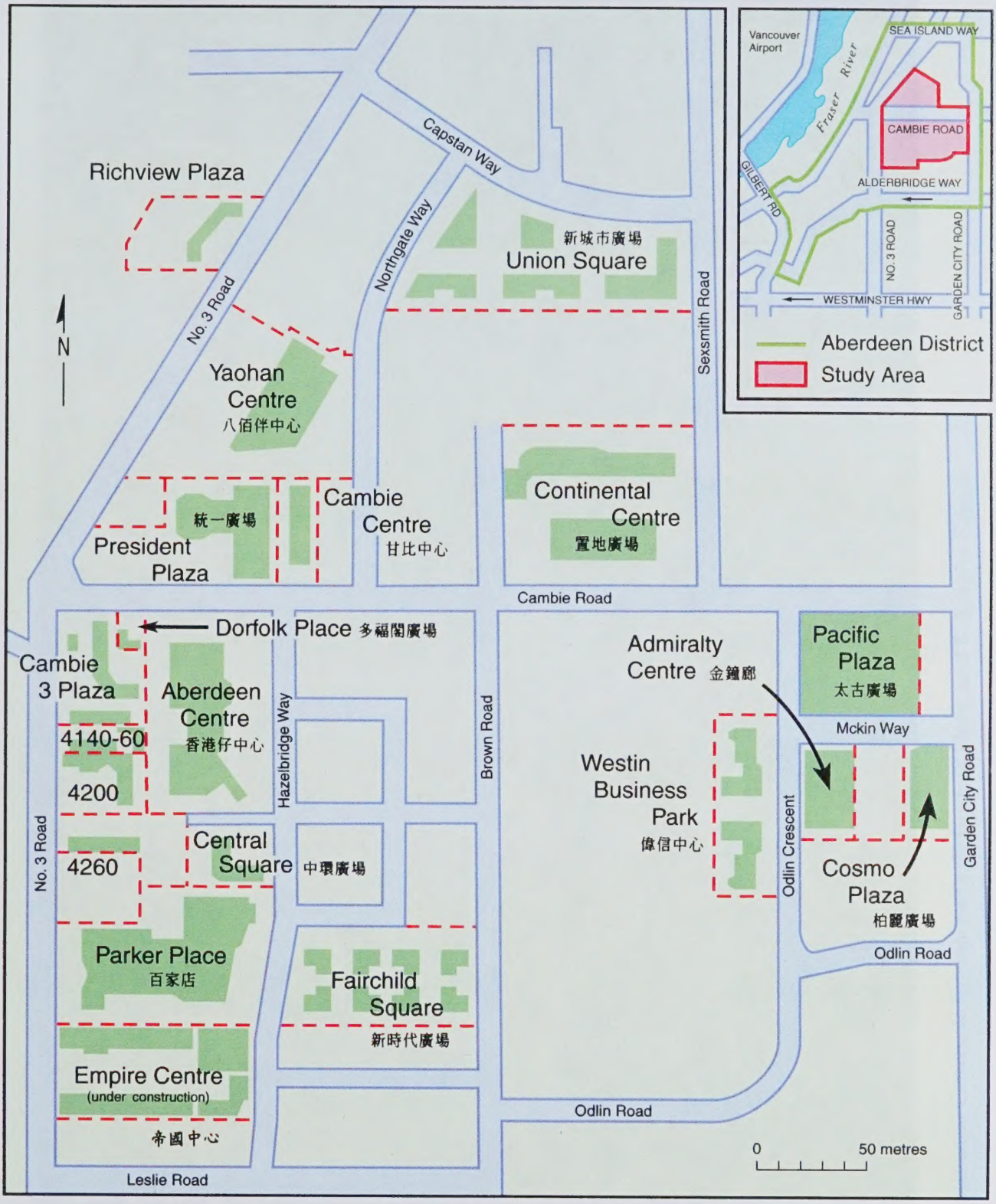


Fig. 3 Distribution of Asian-themed Malls in the Study Area, June 1999

Plate 1 1. Aberdeen Centre, 2. Admiralty Centre, 3. Cambie Centre, and 4. Central Square

Plate 2 5. Continental Centre, 6. Cosmo Plaza, 7. Dorfolk Place, and 8. Empire Centre

Plate 3 9. Fairchild Square, 10. Pacific Plaza, 11. Parker Place, and 12. President Plaza

Plate 4 13. Richvew Plaza, 14. Union Square, 15. Westin Business Park, and 16. Yaohan Centre

Plate 5 17. 4140-60 No. 3 Road, 18. 4200 No. 3 Road, 19. 4260 No. 3 Road, and 20. Cambie 3 Plaza

(C) By Official Participants

1. Provision of higher end retailers.
2. Attract more business that is oriented towards the street.
3. Restrict the covering of windows with posters and limit and integrate signage- better into the architectural character of the building.
4. Other languages in addition to English and Chinese
5. Numbers and building names in English are legible to potential customers, non-residents and tourists.
6. Upgrade the acoustic effect in the open area and hallway as well as the washrooms' hygienic standard.
7. Eliminate "peak time" parking problem by better traffic marking and personnel directing traffic.
8. Have restaurants catering food from different countries, and more nationalized stores such as the Bay, Zellers, Canadian Tire etc.
9. Work with people of different backgrounds to identify what they find visually inviting.
10. Organize fashion shows.
11. Restaurants always advertise "specials" in Chinese and not in English. Show English signs and use English in service. Many non-Asians will patronize if they can read signs, menu etc.

Concentration of Asian-themed Malls in one location

About two-thirds of the participants (n=323 or 59%) felt that it was beneficial to Richmond that Asian-themed malls were concentrated in one location (Table 13). One in ten did not agree (n=59 or 11%), and about one-third of participants (n=166 or 31%) were unsure or did not answer.

Reasons for Yes

(A) Merchants (n=63 or 47%)

1. More convenient to customers and make it a one-stop shopping location.
2. If Asian-themed malls spread all over Richmond, the whole town would be overly Asianized and would have trouble to attract more Caucasians into the city.
3. It will establish a tourist spot. Chinese tradition is maintained so that Chinese can go to the same area with the same living style. Also good for mainstream community.

(B) By Customers (n=237 or 62%)

1. Do not have to walk too far.
2. If the malls are linked closely together, chances are shoppers will take time to shop longer rather than driving to another mall that is located outside the Richmond District.
3. Make shopping easier. One-stop shopping convenience.
4. Minimize traffic flow within the city, reducing pollution and gas consumption, forcing shoppers to walk within the area.
5. Concentration is a natural behaviour and is neither beneficial nor not.
6. If Asian malls are concentrated in one place, customers can easily recognize a place to go there.
7. Many people consider the area a Chinatown and do not need to go from place to place to find Asian products and food.
8. Give good impression to westerners: clean and tidy (unlike Chinatown).

Table 13 Asian-themed Malls in One Location

Opinion	No. of Official Participants	No. of Merchants	No. of Customers	Total
Yes	23	63	237	323
No	1	14	44	59
Not Sure	10	16	49	75
Unanswered	0	40	51	91
Total	34	133	381	548

(C) By Official Participants (n=23 or 68%)

1. It gives the area a flavour, a focal point on entry, a focus on choice. A regional retail focus.
2. It will dilute the focus if the malls are spread out.
3. It creates a character area in the city, focusing future investment, private and public
4. One-stop shopping for visitors and tourists as well as locals.
5. Easy to consolidate trip purpose; economies of agglomeration; concentration of traffic impacts; tourist destination potential.
6. The traffic problems and language concern are limited to one specific area.
7. It would be an attraction similar to that of San Francisco.
8. When modified, they would cater to different taste and palates, attracting both Canadians and tourists worldwide. Prosperity would spread from one location to another, e.g. Chinatown and Robson Street area in Vancouver.
9. The district is well-known throughout the lower mainland - a destination for people seeking the kind of services offered.

Reasons for No

(A) By Merchants (n=14 or 11%)

1. Richmond is not a very big city and it is not a big problem if these malls are spread out.
2. May create bad reputation in this area. If anything bad happens, a particular group of people may be blamed.
3. Form a small circle.
4. Keep competitive and not link to mainstream society.

(B) By Customers (n=44 or 12%)

1. Western people have great interest in Chinese culture, such as the dragon boat race, and the Moon Cake festival.
2. It is better to let people go to all other areas in Richmond.
3. It will alienate the Asian population.

(C) By Official Participants (n=1 or 3%)

1. Richmond is not a very big city. It is not a big problem even if Asian-themed malls were spread out.

Reasons for Being Unsure

(A) By Merchants (n=16 or12%)

1. It will be good to develop other areas in the city. Toronto has multicultural streets in different locations and people can relate or understand which areas by stating the ethnicity
2. Form a small circle but good for new immigrants

(B) By Official Participants (n=10 or 29%)

1. A good tourist attraction but it be balanced against the need of local residents to feel at home in all parts of their city.
2. It can lead to "ghettoisation."
3. If it is concentrated in one area, the merchants are more likely to cater only to Asians, but if it is spread out, it will not be a tourist attraction.
4. There are other Asian businesses in the city centre not in the Aberdeen District. The present concentration has offered potential for an "international" theme which, if developed properly, could be an asset to the city.

Reinforcing the Uniqueness of Asian-theme Malls in the Aberdeen District

Over two-thirds of the 548 participants (n=356 or 65%) strongly agreed or agreed that the Asian-theme of the malls in this District should be reinforced in order to maintain the uniqueness of the area and develop it as a tourist attraction (Table 14). About one in ten (n=67 or 12%) strongly disagreed or disagreed. 82 persons (15%) were not sure, and 43 persons (8%) did not reply.

Reasons for Supporting

(A) Given by Merchants (n=89 or 67%)

1. Encourage more customers as well as tourists to come.
2. This district would introduce Asian culture to American and Canadian society.
3. Use big signs and logo to distinguish from other malls.
4. City has already established this district as an Asian area.
5. Many Chinese customers from U.S. come here during U.S. long weekends.
6. Attract more non-Asian people to come.
7. Help to compete with shopping malls in other districts.

Table 14 Reinforcing the Uniqueness of Asian-themed Malls in the District

Opinion	No. of Official Participants	No. of Merchants	No. of Customers	Total
Strongly Agree	4	21	59	84
Agree	14	68	190	272
Strongly Disagree	1	0	11	12
Disagree	4	16	35	55
Not Sure	9	15	58	82
Unanswered	2	13	28	43
Total	34	133	381	548

(B) Given by Customers (n=249 or 66%)
1. More popular.
2. Make it a tourist spot.
3. There are other major non-Asian malls in Richmond already.

(C) By Official Participants (n=18 or 63%)
1. This will strengthen the characteristics of the area and make it a destination of tourists.
2. It will provide image, colour, and incentives for future investment etc.
3. It will draw more people here and have them support local business.
4. If this area were promoted as Richmond's "Chinatown", more people would visit.
5. Contemporary up-market developments in Singapore, Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur provide interesting examples of the merging of east and west. The Aberdeen District should not be "Old Chinatown." It should be a new invention appropriate to the 21st century and our global society, with its roots in both the east and west and in Richmond.

Reasons for Opposing

(A) Given by Merchants (n=16 or 12%)
1. Diversity will help business.
2. Most of the residents and customers are Asians.
3. Doing business with local residents are already enough.
4. Do not want more white people.
5. More non-Asian customers.
6. Do not want to form a small ethnic enclave.

(B) Given by Customers (n=46 or 12%)
1. Most customers are local residents and not tourists.
2. The district has already symbolized too much of Hong Kong.

(C) Given by Official Participants (n=5 or 15%)
(1) Reinforcement may cause the tension among local residents.
(2) It is unsure whether this development is the kind of tourist attraction the City of Richmond needs. It is just another shopping centre regardless of cultural background in a city already rich in shopping.

Reasons for Being Unsure

(A) Given by Merchants (n=15 or 11%)
1. Malls are not necessarily considered as a "tourist" attraction.
2. Attract more local people and tourists.

(B) Given by Official Participants (n=9 or 26%)
1. The reinforcement should been undertaken within a limited area. At present, it is difficult to define where this area would begin and end as many Asian retail areas have already spread to the Brighouse Area.
2. Reinforcement depends on
   a) how it is reinforced? Appearance, products, service and activities?
   b) what type of tourists: e.g. Asian tourists from U.S. come to shop; seldom stay in hotel

c) what kind of demands of tourists: they come to experience the landscape of B.C. and explore the famous food, colour and "bubbling life" an Asian mall distinctly provides.

3. The uniqueness can be supported but it may not be a good idea to promote the area as a "Chinatown" of Richmond. Setting this area apart, it could be supported as a unique area, but part of community similar to how Steveston is - unique, part of Richmond, and interesting for tourists.
4. This means that merchants are targeting only 30% of Richmond's population.
5. We are multicultural and should not single out one nationality over another.

Development of Asian-themed Malls in the Neighbourhood of the District

The Aberdeen District has been established and perceived as an "Asian-themed" retailing area. Participants were quite divided in their opinion whether similar developments should continue in the neighbourhood of the District in order to enhance and sustain its viability (Table 15). Slightly over one-third of the participants said "Yes" (n=210 or 38%), about one-third said "No," (n=176 or 32%), and about one-third were not sure or did not reply (n=162 or 29%)

Table 15 Development of Additional Asian-themed Malls in the Aberdeen District

Opinion	No. of Official Participants	No. of Merchants	No. of Customers	Total
Yes	8	45	157	210
No	14	46	116	176
Not Sure	9	27	75	111
Unanswered	3	15	33	51
Total	34	133	381	548

Reasons for "Yes"

(A) Given by Merchants (n=45 or 34%)

1. More business, more prosperous - attract more customers.
2. Help more Asian culture to integrate into the main stream.

(B) Given by Customers (n=157 or 41%)

1. Too crowded in one mall and not enough parking. Spread out.
2. Do not have to walk/drive too far away for Asian food and goods.

(C) Given by Official Participants (n=8 or 24%)

1. Similar development as well as other retails and services for everyone to visit and utilize.
2. Yes, provided that the developers consider the population mix, gender mix, ethnic mix, specially in jobs offering.

Reasons for "No"

(A) Given by Merchants (n=46 or 35%)
1. Already too much competition in similar business.
2. Serious parking problem.
3. Already too many Asian-themed malls and too many empty shops in this district.

(B) Given by Customers (n=116 or 30%)
1. Enough retailing, too saturated.
2. Spread out, not enough business.
3. Already many empty stores.
4. No enough parking.
5. Supply has already exceeded demand and no more retailing.

(C) Given by Official Participants (n=14 or 41%)
1. The area is "over-retailed." There are still many empty and unleased units in some malls. We should concentrate on the development of the existing malls and other retailing areas. Allow the existing business to survive.
2. We should make the most of what we have there now, and make the Asian-themed malls be used by all people.
3. Other ethnic groups such as East Indians, Italians, Germans, etc. in the community have been able to prosper with no nationally themed shopping districts.
4. Make the area a truly international Asian District.
5. Establish a critical mass of complementary developments so that the district, not individual projects, has a regional recognition.

Reasons for Being Unsure

(A) Given by Merchants (n=27 or 20%)
1. May not have enough customers

(B) Given by Official Participants (n=9 or 26%)
1. Only if they are more "street-oriented"
2. Only if the market can sustain additional "Asian" retailing.
3. There should be a study of which markets are to be targeted.
4. Depends on what "similar development" means

High/Low Density Retailing Development

Participants were asked for their choice between multi-storey retailing (high-density development) or more grade-level retailing (low-density development), and rank their choice: first choice (3 points on preference), second choice (2 points on preference), and no particular preference (1 point on preference). The calculation method of Points on Preference is as follows: e.g., in the preference of high density development, 38 merchants chose first choice (38 x 3 points = 114 points), 14 merchants chose 2nd choice (14 x 2 points = 28 points), and 39 merchants had no particular preference (39 x 1 points = 39 points). Therefore, the Score of Points on Preference of merchants on high-density development was 114 + 28 + 39 points = 181 points.

This calculation reveals that participants were roughly divided in their choice, although more merchants preferred low-density development in the District (Table 16).

Table 16 Preference for High or Low Density Retailing Development

Opinion	No. of Points on Preference			
	Official	Participants	Merchants	Customers	Total
High-Density	6	181	676	923
Low-Density	53	216	592	861

Those who preferred high-density development felt that it would maximize the use of land and reduce walking in shopping. They felt that land in Richmond was getting too valuable and scarce, and development should go up and should not stretch out over the surrounding undeveloped area of the District. Furthermore, multi-storey offices and retails mean more shops, more customers, and an increase of the choice and range of service and they give shoppers the advantage of one-stop shopping convenience. Customers would be prepared to spend time exploring the different departments in a multi-storey retail building. With apartments on the upper floors and retailing on the ground floor, the District would be people oriented both day and night. On the other hand, grade-level retailing or low density retail sprawl would not only cause traffic congestion but also increase the distance over which shoppers must travel. Some respondents felt that auto-oriented strip malls were generally unattractive, especially when they were grouped together.

Those who opposed high-density development felt that the district was already short of parking spaces. A high-density development would aggravate the parking shortage and lead to greater congestion of traffic and an increase in pollution. Furthermore, customers usually prefer shopping on the ground floor and a multi-storey retail building would do little to nurture a friendly community-oriented sense of space.

Those participants who had no particular preference in terms of density stated that whatever the density was, any new developments should have a stronger connection/orientation to pedestrian traffic. Some participants thought that high density would make business more competitive and strip malls were not needed in the District; hence, medium density development might be preferable. Some suggested filling up the existing empty retailing/office units in the malls first before any planning.

Construction of Public Parkades

Over two-thirds of the participants (n=548 or 75%) felt that public parkades should be built to resolve the parking problem in the Aberdeen District (Table 17). Fifty-four participants (10%) did not agree, 46 participants (8%) were not sure and 36 (7%) participants did not reply. Some merchants complained that there was not enough parking during peak periods and event times. Many respondents supported the construction of public parkades only if they were either free or inexpensive. Some official participants felt that parkade development would help cut down traffic snarls, eliminate "front of store" parking, and help support more pedestrian-oriented business. However, more enhanced and safe pedestrian connections should be established between one mall and another. Those who objected to public parkades stated that they were not free whereas there were already many free parking lots in the District. Some felt that parkade development did not help encourage transit use.

Table 17 Construction of Public Parkades

Opinion	No. of Official Participants	No. of Merchants	No. of Customers	Total
Strongly Agree	13	46	192	251
Agree	14	43	104	161
Strongly Disagree	1	1	8	10
Disagree	2	12	30	44
Not Sure	3	21	22	46
Unanswered	1	10	25	36
Total	34	133	381	548

Construction of Skywalks to Link Up the Malls

Over two-thirds of the respondents (n=401 or 73%) supported the idea of linking up all the shopping centres in the Aberdeen District with skywalks similar to the skywalk development in Calgary (Table 18). Sixty-six participants (12%) opposed the idea, 32 (6%) were not sure and 49 (9%) did not reply.

Table 18 Construction of Skywalks

Opinion	No. of Official Participants	No. of Merchants	No. of Customers	Total
Yes	19	90	292	401
No	11	16	39	66
Not Sure	3	9	20	32
Unanswered	1	18	30	49
Total	34	133	381	548

Those who supported the construction of skywalks stated that shoppers could walk instead of drive from one mall to another, and could stay out of the sun in hot summers and rain and snow in cold winters, thereby enjoying a more relaxing and convenient shopping experience without the hazard of traffic. Furthermore, skywalks would encourage mall activities, help change mall competition to cooperation, and make mall shopping more inviting. Although skywalks would help reduce traffic congestion and the parking problem, some supporting participants worried that their construction might be very expensive, and suggested that sky walks should be confined to Cambie Road only.

Those who objected to the idea felt that skywalks were unnecessary because the malls were very close to one another. Furthermore, Richmond did not have a severely cold climate like Calgary. Skywalks would create a privatized pedestrian environment and kill the vitality of street-level pedestrian areas. They felt that Richmond, an area at sea level, should continue to maintain its own clear and distinctive identity: "child of the Fraser," and "Island by Nature." Those who were not sure felt that

skywalks might look like a spider net and destroy the open air space of the District. Who would pay for the construction was also their main concern; mall owners or tax payers?

Future Projects to Enhance the Prosperity of the District

Participants were given a list of projects and asked whether they strongly agreed (5 points), agreed (4 points) , were not sure (3 points), disagreed (2 points) or strongly disagreed (1 point) that a certain project would enhance the prosperity of the Aberdeen District. For example, 34 official participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that a multi-screen cinema complex would enhance the prosperity of the Aberdeen District. One person strongly agreed (1 x 5 points), 11 persons agreed (11 x 4 points), 1 person was not sure (1 x 3 points), 2 persons disagreed (2 x 2 points), 2 persons strongly disagreed (2 x 1 points), and 11 persons did not reply (11 x 0 point). Hence, the multi-screen cinema project scored a total of 58 points and was ranked very low by the official participants (Table 19). On the other hand, this proposed project was ranked at the top by the customers (1311 points) and by the merchants (369) as a future project which would enhance the prosperity of the Aberdeen District and merchants. A cultural centre, night clubs and themed restaurants were all favoured by the three groups of participants whereas the development of a casino was the lowest in preference. The construction of hotels was not much favoured by the official participants although it was much desired by the merchants and customers. Both residential use and senior housing seemed to be less favourable possibly because the area is under the flight path of the airport. Some participants suggested the construction of a waterslide park or a swimming pool in the District. Waterfront development is a complicated planning project. One respondent questioned how the waterfront development would enhance the prosperity of the Aberdeen District. Suggestions for the waterfront developments included the development of hotels, marinas, floating homes, floating kiosks or restaurants, hotels, a promenade along the Fraser River on the Dyke Road and a floating pontoon walkway stretching out parallel to the Dyke Road.

Table 19 Desirable Projects for the Aberdeen District

Projects	Scores of Points on Preference			
	Official Participants	Merchants	Customers	Total
Multi-screen Cinema Complex	58	369	1,311	1,738
Hotels	67	355	1,189	1,611
High-tech Game Complex	59	309	1,211	1,579
Cultural Centre	120	308	1,143	1,571
Night Clubs and Themed Restaurants	40	313	1,136	1,519
Trade and Exhibition Centre	67	321	1,128	1,516
Park	71	270	1,101	1,442
Office Buildings	71	292	989	1,352
Child Care facilities	68	276	957	1,301
Residential Uses	59	253	949	1,261
Senior Housing	70	204	854	1,128
Religious Facilities	69	222	826	1,117
Casino	40	241	815	1,096
Waterfront Development	60	180	827	1,067

Racial Issue

One-fifth of the participants (n=110 or 20%) felt that the development of Asian-themed malls had created racial problems in Richmond (Table 20), and about one-third (n=201 or 37%) were not sure or did not answer. Two hundred and thirty-seven participants (43%) did not think so. However, 44% of the official participants felt that the Asian-themed malls had led to racial problems whereas 40% of merchants and 45% of customers did not think so.

Table 20 Racial Problems Created by Asian-themed Malls

Opinion	No. of Official Participants	No. of Merchants	No. of Customers	Total
Yes	15	22	73	110
No	11	54	172	237
No Sure	7	17	86	110
Unanswered	1	40	50	91
Total	34	133	381	548

Reasons for "Yes"

(A) By Merchants (n=22 or 17%)

1. Western people are not so nice to Chinese as they were before.
2. Yes if concentrated. No if spread out.
3. Yes, a little.
4. Western people feel isolated.
5. Sale persons do not speak English fluently.

(B) By Customers (n=73 or 19%)

1 Chinese are forming a small group.
2 It seems that Asians take over other people's places.
3. It makes Richmond become an Asian community rather than a place of other racial groups.
4. Language barrier to the mainstream community.
5. Seems to be Hong Kong.
6. They create walls between Chinese and other ethnic groups.
7. Non-Asian residents would stay away from the district.
8. Upset residents when driving through the shopping area due to slow traffic flow caused by shoppers.
9. Give people impression that they do not belong in a certain cultural area.
10. It is the Caucasian racial attitude towards Asians because Asian people welcome people of other races to come.

(C) By Official Participants (n=15 or 44%)

1. Many long-time residents feel that they are not welcome when signs and language are not English. The development has given an air of cultural exclusivity.

2. Have received complaints that non-Asians are not treated the same as Asians by mall staff.
3. Less job opportunities for other than Asians.
4. Non-English signage has to some extent created the perception that Richmond is too Asian-oriented.
5. It is not the only factor but it does lend itself to racial tensions.
6. The Asian merchants need to continue their public relations efforts to make all residents feel welcome.
7. English speaking people cannot understand signs, advertisements, menus etc. The cause of animosity is due to sheer frustration.
8. Caucasians - feeling of discomfort inside an Asian mall. Impression that only Asians are welcome. Largely staffed by persons of Asian background - Jobs for Asians. Employees do not or cannot speak English and do not care for non-Asian customers.

Reasons for "No"

(A) By Merchants (n=54 or 40%)

1. One corner for Chinese people so they would not "invade" the others.
2. Canada is multicultural country.
3. There are also western customers in Asian-themed malls.
4. If people do not like Asian-themed products, they can choose not to visit the malls. Also majority of residents are now Asian immigrants.
5. Asian-themed malls are similar to Chinatown where there is no racial problem.

(B) By Customers (n=172 or 45%)

1. Not yet..
2. Just like another Chinatown. If there are no problems in Vancouver Chinatown, there should be no problems in Richmond.
3. In business, there should be no racial problem.
4. New immigrants and people from host society should comprise and not just new immigrants' effort.
5. Each culture has its own uniqueness and we should learn from each other's culture.
6. It will let local people know what kind of different products are available from Asia.
7. One issue is among people from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China , different dialects.
8. Racial problems have always been in B.C. Asian themed malls only bring out the sentiment.
9. People generate racial problems and not mall development.

(C) By Official Participants (n=11 or 32%)

1. Problems arise no matter what the retailing pattern is.
2. Great planning has been done to ease any potential tensions.
3. Any racial tensions exist for deeper reasons. Some malls have already been working slowly to try and build bridges between Asian and non-Asian communities.
4. Canada is a cultural mosaic.
5. Racial problems stem from far different roots than a shopping mall.
6. Some problems existed a few years ago centred around signage and rapid change, but that tension seems to have disappeared as the area has matured.

Reasons for Being Unsure

(A) By Merchants (n=17 or 13%)

1. Overall Richmond is Asian-oriented. Racial problems are caused by ourselves - the merchants speak little or no English. Chinese signs only.

(B) By Customers (n=86;23%)

1. Depend on the people. e.g. Asians are blamed for the high prices of housing but it is the Caucasian developers that get all the money.

(C) By Official Participants (n=7 or 21%)

1. Some Caucasians feel unwelcome but some don't.
2. What the existing Asian malls displayed is disrespect for English-speaking Canadians due to ignorance rather than racism.
3. All citizens of Richmond should feel welcome in all parts of the city. Understanding (language) will embrace differences.
4. It is an excuse, not the problem.
5. In the process of Asian-themed Malls development, would you give suggestions for promoting racial integration and good relationship?
6. A good tourist attraction but it can be balanced against the need of local residents to feel at home in all parts of their city.
7. It can lead to "ghettoisation."
8. If it is concentrated in one area, the merchants are more likely to cater only to Asians, but if it is spread out, it will not be a tourist attraction.
9. There are other Asian businesses in the city centre not in the Aberdeen District. The present concentration has offered potential for an "international" theme which, if developed properly, could be an asset to the city.

Suggestions for Promoting Racial Integration and Good Relationship

(A) By Merchants

1. People should be more polite and friendly.
2. Encourage integration and more communication - description and translation in English.
3. Give good service to every race/people.
4. Encourage non-Asian business in the area, more "local" theme.
5. Do not put all Chinese malls in one location.
6. Consider the need of Caucasians.
7. More program for non-Asians to experience our life style since many Caucasians have no experience of Asian food etc.
8. Invite English media to come to explore the area.

(B) By Customers

1. More non-Asian merchants.
2. Signs, advertisements in Chinese and English.
3. Organize Cantonese classes for Taiwanese and Mandarin-speaking Chinese.
4. More events to introduce Asian culture to non-Asian people.
5. Organize free tours to Asian-themed malls.
6. Advertisements in English newspaper, radio, TV etc.
7. Sell more of other countries' products.

8. Organize international and multicultural events.
9. Be polite to all customers especially to people of other ethnic origins. Let them know the Asian malls welcome Asians and non-Asian customers.
10. Employ non-Asian employees.

(C) By Official Participants

1. More cooperation between different groups in the planning stages.
2. Promoting English/Chinese signages and use of English language. English should be used in business signages in commercial properties. Hire bilingual staff.
3. Internationalization - inclusion of more international retailing choices.
4. Promoting community-wide activities and customer friendly program for merchants.
5. More jobs for non-Asian people.
6. Education to enhance/improve relationships. Education from management to staff levels on Canadian smiles, friendliness, openness, caring nature, honesty and business ethics. Create a "welcoming" atmosphere.
7. Give guided tours in English so the audience would have a better understanding of the products.
8. Coffee get together, to meet and talk where everyone is welcome. Community meeting to discuss issues and solutions.
9. Better management of the facility is more important than initial design.
10. Promote understanding and tolerance of cultural differences. Promote malls among non- Asian population. Show their interest in this population by having English signs and English speaking staff.
11. Advertise in mainstream media..
12. More multicultural events.
13. Open houses, specially encouraging Caucasians to attend.

Business Immigration Policy

About half of the participants (n=293 or 53%) agreed that the federal government should continue its business immigration policy which will help the economic growth of Richmond. (Table 21). However, 79 participants (14%) did not agree whereas about one-third of the participants (n=176 or 33%) were not sure or did not answer.

Table 21 Continuation of the Business Immigration Policy

Opinion	No. of Official Participants	No. of Merchants	No. of Customers	Total
Strongly Agree	0	20	73	93
Agree	4	55	141	200
Strongly Disagree	0	4	8	12
Disagree	2	16	49	67
Not Sure	7	10	68	85
Unanswered	21	28	42	91
Total	34	133	381	548

Reasons for Agreeing

(A) By Merchants (n=75 or 56%)
1. More people and more investment.
2. More customers if more immigrants.
3. More economic growth.
4. Help create jobs.

(B) By Customers (n=214 or 56%)
1. Still room for development in Richmond.
2. It will reduce unemployment and promote economy.

(C) By Official Participants (n=4 or 12%)
1. Help promote more business.
2. Generate job, economic activities, and developments/infrastructure improvements.

Reasons for Disagreeing

(A) By Merchants (n=20 or 15%)
1. The policies do not "weed" out immigrants and therefore place more burden on social structure.
2. Less amount of investment for investor immigrants.
3. Provide a better environment for business, e.g. lower tax rate.
4. Relax some of the restrictions in the immigration policy.
5. Language standard requirement and high investment amount discourage immigration.
6. No. of small businesses have reached a saturation level.

(B) By Customers (n=57 or 15%)
1. Should not force immigrants to do business in order to get citizenship.
2. Relax the strict regulations.
3. Too many restrictions on developing small business and refugee regulation is too loose.
4. The business investor policy benefits only rich immigrants.
5. Richmond has enough business.

(C) By Official Participants (n=2 or 6%)
1. Richmond only has so much land to develop without becoming a nightmarish mess.
2. Are these businesses really providing a useful service/product which the community needs?
3. Further heavy immigration will only further divide the community - needs time to adjust.
4. The existing policy stinks unless the aim/method of the policy changed.
5. All potential immigrants should be treated in the same manner, with the same set of rules and guidelines.

Reasons for Being Unsure

(A) By Merchants (n=10 or 8%)
1. Investors are not necessary to start business in Richmond.
2. Not important now since we already have a lot of Asian business immigrants.

(B) By Customers (n=68 or 18%)

1. Do not know much about the policy.

(C) By Official Participants (n=7 or 20%)

1. Do not have enough information about this program to comment.
2. Not familiar with current policy.
3. Provided the economic benefits touch the lives of all its residents.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study of Asian-themed malls is based on interviews with a sample of 19 mall developers/major partners, 133 mall merchants, and 381 mall customers, and questionnaire replies from 34 official participants of the City of Richmond.

The term "Asian-themed" mall is a perception and cannot be quantitatively defined by the percentage of developers, merchants or shoppers of Asian ethnic origin. Nevertheless, several broad observations can be made about the differences between an "Asian-theme" mall and a conventional mall. For example, the office/retailing units of an Asian-themed mall are usually numerous and small, and similar to tiny retail outlets in a bazaar where customers and stores are grouped together in a pedestrian precinct. This study revealed that about half of the 1,255 units inside the 19 Asian-theme malls have an average area ranging between 300 and 999 square feet. Most of them are strata-titled. Retailing business was dominated by boutiques, restaurants, and food stores catering to Chinese clientele, especially Hong Kong customers.

Nearly 39% of the 381 responding mall customers were young people, aged between 15 and 21. Most of them were Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong and speak Cantonese and/or Mandarin. About two-thirds of the responding customers used Cantonese only or both Cantonese and other languages during the interview. Although 60% of the customers lived in Richmond , 23 % came from Vancouver, 7% from Burnaby, 3 % from North or West Vancouver and 2% from Surrey or Delta. Hence, the Asian-themed malls serve a regional market of Metropolitan Vancouver and have a regional component to their trade area. Interview data on consumer trips indicate that most of the customers came to the malls by private car, and spend about two hours shopping in the Chinese supermarket/bakery, having lunch or dinner in Chinese restaurants, and meeting friends. Customers chose this area because of its free parking, convenient location to meet friends, and one-stop shopping convenience. Some senior respondents said that they came to the malls to meet friends and "kill time." All the 25 non-Chinese customers out of 381 respondents spoke English in the interview. Only one-fifth of them lived in Richmond and over half of them in other parts of Metropolitan Vancouver. They came here mainly for Oriental food and products as well as events such as Chinese New Year celebrations. Similar to some large conventional malls, the Asian-themed malls are popular locations for social gatherings or business meetings, and prominent leisure-time venues and sites for recreational activities.

A total of 548 interviewees responded to the questions on the future of the Aberdeen District. Over half of them felt that more non-Asian stores selling non-Asian products should be set up in the Asian-themed malls in order to sustain their growth in the district. Although it is important to maintain the unique characteristics of the malls, most interviewees felt that it is also important to broaden the range of customers and visitors from different ethnic backgrounds by increasing the use of English signage, product description, and while serving customers. Most interviewees preferred the concentration of Asian-themed malls in one location and suggested reinforcing the unique characteristics of the Aberdeen District and developing it into a tourist attraction. They were quite divided in their opinion of whether more Asian-themed malls should be built in the neighbourhood of the Aberdeen District. The major opposing reasons were that there were already too many Asian-themed malls in the District and some of them still have many empty and unleased units. About half of the interviewees did not feel that the development of Asian-themed malls had created racial problems in Richmond.

With regards to retailing density, most of the merchants did not like high density development mainly because it would aggravate the problems of parking shortage, traffic congestion and air pollution. Furthermore, many retailing merchants felt the negative effect of a sluggish economy and stated that some malls still had many unleased or unsold units. Over two-thirds of the participants felt that a public parkade should be built to resolve the parking problem in the Aberdeen District, and

supported the idea of linking up all the shopping centres with skywalks. Both merchants and customers would like to have a multi-screen cinema complex and hotels in the District whereas official participants preferred a cultural centre.

Chinese radios and word-of- mouth play a more important role than Chinese newspapers and television in advertising the sales, performances and other events in the malls. About two-thirds of the responding merchants welcome programs or events organized by social service agents of government departments in the malls once a month or during festive holidays such as the Chinese New Year. Over half of the merchants stated that they would help by putting up posters, distributing flyers or making a donation in kind.

This study shows that Hong Kong investors played an very important role in the development of the malls. Twelve out of 19 malls were built by Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong. They chose Richmond mainly because of its established Asian market and return-on-investment potential. Proximity to the airport, provision of city services and immigration policies of Canada had little or no influence on the original mall developers' choice of Richmond. Two-thirds of the 133 responding mall merchants were Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong, and about one-third of them were admitted as investors or entrepreneur immigrants. About half of them entered Canada during the 1990s. Most of them ran the business to create jobs for themselves and/or for their family members, and to make a living in Canada. Two-thirds of the respondents had already obtained Canadian citizenship and very few merchants operated the business purely to fulfil the requirement of the immigration regulations. Two-thirds of the respondents leased the units and half of them were a sole proprietor of their business. Only 111 store owners revealed their employment figures: about 70 per cent of them employed non-relative workers only or had non-relative employees in addition to owners themselves and their relatives. About half of the responding participants felt that the federal government should continue its business immigration policy which will help the economic growth of Richmond.

The growth of Asian-themed malls in Richmond is an example of a new form of economic activity and a new type of urban development created mainly by Asian immigrants. The Aberdeen District, where Asian-themed malls consist of many businesses operated by Asian immigrants, features a distinctive ethnocultural ambience and socio-economic activities which give the host society as well as the tourists the opportunity to experience different cultures in an authentic and natural setting. This study, while not theoretical, has theoretical implications for further research on the concept of clustering. The study demonstrates the extent to which each business in an Asian-themed mall depends on the close proximity of other Asian-themed stores to attract Asian as well as non-Asian customers.

Appendices

1. Population of Chinese Ethnic Origin in Major Metropolitan Cities in Canada, 1996

Major Census Metro Areas & Agglomerations	No. of Persons	% of Total
Toronto	359,450	39.0
Vancouver	288,795	31.3
Montreal	51,130	5.5
Calgary	48,900	5.3
Edmonton	42,150	4.6
Ottawa-Hull	21,885	2.4
Winnipeg	13,305	1.4
Victoria	10,010	1.1
Hamilton	8,060	0.9
Kitchener	5,265	0.6
Windsor	5,210	0.6
London	4,955	0.5
Saskatoon	4,020	0.4
Regina	3,560	0.4
Halifax	2,875	0.3
Oshawa	2,685	0.3
St. Catharines-Niagara	2,440	0.3
Guelph	1,865	0.2
Lethbridge	1,590	0.2
Abbotsford	1,590	0.2
Quebec	1,505	0.2
Kingston	1,475	0.1
Nanaimo	1,350	0.1
Prince George	1,075	0.1
St. John's	910	0.1
Kelowna	885	0.1
Kamloops	880	0.1
Red Deer	785	0.1
Fredericton	775	0.1
Thunder Bay	695	0.1
Medicine Hat	690	0.1
Sudbury	645	0.1
Other Towns and Cities	30, 765	3.2
Total	921,585 (1)	100.0

Sources: Census of Canada, 1996

(1) *This figure does not include 7,770 Taiwanese and 780 Tibetans*

2. Population of Chinese Ethnic Origin in Canada by Province or Territory, 1996

Province	No. of Persons	% of Total
Ontario	422,770	45.87
British Columbia	312.330	33.89
Alberta	98,135	10.65
Quebec	55,870	6.06
Manitoba	14.485	1.57
Saskatchewan	9,970	1.08
Nova Scotia	3,675	0.40
New Brunswick	1,830	0.20
Newfoundland	1,415	0.15
Prince Edward Is.	455	0.05
NW Territories	410	0.04
Yukon Territory	235	0.03
Total	921,585	100.00

Source: Census of Canada, 1996

3. Population of Chinese Ethnic Origin in Metropolitan Vancouver, 1996

Municipality	No. of Persons	% of Total
Vancouver City	143,115	49.56
Richmond City	50,215	17.38
Burnaby City	40,165	13.91
Coquitlam City	15,530	5.38
Surrey City	14,196	4.92
North Vancouver DM	4,285	1.48
Port Coquitlam City	3,960	1.37
Delta DM	3,935	1.36
West Vancouver DM	3,685	1.28
New Westminster City	1,785	0.62
Port Moody City	1,535	0.53
North Vancouver City	1,525	0.53
University Endowment Area	1,285	0.44
Maple Ridge DM	1,135	0.39
Langley DM	1,090	0.38
Others	1,355	0.47
Total	288,795	100.00

Source: Census of Canada, 1996

Notes

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